

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 5, and 30 as indicated below. A listing of all claims and their current status in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(c) is provided below.

1. (Currently amended) A method of soft-baking a semiconductor wafer comprising the acts of:
 - (a) soft-baking a semiconductor wafer comprising a substrate having a plurality of features formed thereon at a first temperature for a first predetermined period of time, wherein the plurality of features is coated with a resist such that, at the time act (a) begins, at least one unfilled void is present under the resist and between two of the plurality of features; and
 - (b) after act (a), soft-baking the semiconductor wafer at a second higher temperature for a second predetermined period of time.
2. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein no resist craters are formed.
3. (Previously presented) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein during the first predetermined period of time:
the resist hardens; and
air trapped in the at least one unfilled void under the resist does not possess sufficient energy to expand through the resist.
4. (Previously presented) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein during the first predetermined period of time:
the resist remains fluid;
air trapped in the at least one unfilled void under the resist expands through the resist to the surface; and

the resist flows back to its original conformal shape.

5. (Currently amended) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the semiconductor wafer is subjected to a temperature in the range of 30-75[[90]] °C during the first predetermined period of time.

6. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first predetermined period of time is less than 90 seconds.

7. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first predetermined period of time is more than 90 seconds.

8. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the higher temperature is in the range of 90-150 °C.

9. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the higher temperature is in the range of 100-130 °C.

10. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second predetermined period of time is less than 90 seconds.

11. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second predetermined period of time is more than 90 seconds.

12.-28. (Canceled)

29. (Previously presented) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein subsequent to acts (a) and (b), the at least one unfilled void remains present under the resist.

30. (Previously presented) A method of soft-baking a semiconductor wafer, comprising the acts of:

- (a) soft-baking a substrate having a plurality of features coated with a resist at a first temperature of between approximately 30 to 75 degrees °C for a first predetermined period of time using a first thermal unit; and
- (b) after act (a), soft-baking the substrate at a second higher temperature of between approximately 90 to 150 degrees °C for a second predetermined period of time using a second thermal unit.

31. (Previously presented) The method, as set forth in claim 30, wherein:
prior to acts (a) and (b), at least one unfilled void is present under the resist and between two of the plurality of features; and
subsequent to acts (a) and (b), the at least one unfilled void remains present under the resist.